

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 01426 290912Z

15

ACTION EA-09

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SCA-01 EB-07 IO-13 CU-02 SAM-01 /088 W

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O 290832Z JUL 76

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6067

INFO AMONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE 3561

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TPHY CH

SUBJECT: EARTHQUAKE UPDATE

REF: PEKING 1415

IN A PERRHAPS UNPRECEDENTED INDICATION OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF AN EARTHQUAKE, PEOPLE'S DAILY AND PEKING RADIO TODAY GAVE HEAD-LINE TREATMENT TO RESCUE EFFORTS BEING MOUNTED IN NORTHEAST HOPEI PROVINCE, THE AREA HARDEST HIT BY THE JULY 28 QUAKE. ACCORDING TO AN NCNA REPORT, THE QUAKE MEASURED 7.5 POINTS, WITH ITS EPICENTER IN THE TANGSHAN-FENGNAN AREA LOCATED AT 39.4 DEGREES NORTH, 118.1 DEGREES EAST. (EARLIER NOTIFICATION FROM MFA HAD SAID QUAKE MEASURED 7.3 POINTS.)

2. PEOPLE'S DAILY REPORTED THAT THE TANGSHAN AREA SUFFERED A "VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE," WHILE THE SHOCKS IN PEKING AND TIENTSIN, WHICH SEEMED VIOLENT ENOUGH TO LOCAL RESIDZMTS, WERE CHARACTERIZED AS "RELATIVELY STRONG." IN FACT, TANGSHAN CITY WAS SINGLED OUT IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S CONDOLENCE MESSAGE AS SUFFERING "EXTREMELY SERIOUS DAMAGE AND LOSSES." THIS AND THE FACT THAT

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PAGE 02 PEKING 01426 290912Z

THE MESSAGE WAS SENT SPECIFICALLY TO THE TANGSJIN AREA RESIDENTS

AS WELL AS TRAVELLERS' REPORTS FROM TANGSHAN, INDICATES THAT THAT CITY SUFFERED EXTREMELY HEAVY DAMAGE.

3. THE PICTURE OF TIENTSIN WHICH EMERGES FROM TALKS WITH VARIOUS FOREIGN TRAVELLERS IS THAT OF A CITY WHICH SUFFERED HEAVIER DESTRUCTION THAN PEKING, BUT WHICH IS BY NO MEANS A SCENE OF DEVASTATION OR DISORDER. THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY HERE, WHOSE 70-MEMBER CULTURAL TROUPE COMPRISED THE MAJORITY OF THE FOREIGN VISITORS IN TIENTSIN, AND AN AMERICAN LABOR GROUP STAYING IN THE SAME HOTEL HAVE BOTH CONFIRMED AUSTRALIAN REPORTS THAT ALL FOREIGNERS WERE EVACUATED SAFELY FROM THE MAIN HOTEL, ALTHOUGH A FEW SUFFERED MINOR CUTS AND BRUISES. THE HOTEL REPORTEDLY SPLIT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE AND SWAYED VIOLENTLY, BUT DID NOT COLLAPSE. GUESTS WERE TAKEN BY BUS TO A STADIUM AND THEN TO A CLUB, AND THEN EVACUATED BY TRAIN TO PEKING. DUE APPARENTLY TO UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS, THE TRIP WHICH NORMALLY TAKES TWO HOURS, TOOK EIGHT.

4. IN TANGSHAN, AN INDUSTRIAL CITY OF ABOUT A MILLION INHABITANTS AND SITE OF CHINA'S LARGEST COAL MINE, ONE FRENCH GIRL AND ONE JAPANESE MAN ARE REPORTED TO HAVE DIED IN THE QUAKE, TWO JAPANESE ARE MISSING AND PRESUMED DEAD, WHILE SEVERAL OTHER JAPANESE WERE INJURED. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON CHINESE CASUALTIES IN THE AREA, BUT WE HAVE HEARD THAT LARGE AMOUNTS OF MEDICINE AND OTHER RELIEF SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN SENT THERE FROM PEKING.

5. IN PEKING, MEANWHILE, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF RESIDENTS ARE REMAINING OUTSIDE IN MAKESHIFT SHELTERS FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE DAY WHILE AWAITING THE SIGNAL TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. HOSPITALS HAVE BEEN "VERY BUSY," ACCORDING TO ONE CHINESE OFFICIAL, AND SOME BUILDINGS, INCLUDING, REPORTEDLY, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HAVE DEVELOPED LARGE CRACKS. A FAIRLY LARGE TREMOR YESTERDAY EVENING ABOUT 1900 HOURS LOCAL TIME WAS FOLLOWED BY SLIGHT TREMORS ABOUT MIDNIGHT AND THREE FORTY-FIVE HOURS, BUT NO QUAKES HAVE BEEN DETECTED IN THE PAST TWELVE HOURS.

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